

THIS YEAR IN ALBANY 2024



A MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT

2025 NEW YORK
STATE BUDGET

2024 LEGISLATIVE
SESSION

PEOPLE PROGRAM



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PEOPLE PROGRAM

MESSAGE FROM CSEA PRESIDENT **MARY E. SULLIVAN**

Sisters and brothers,

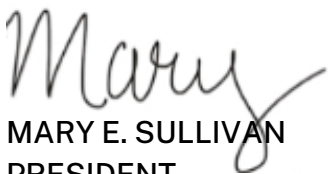
This was a strong year for CSEA and unions across the state.

We secured crucial pension reform for Tier 6 members and eliminated the burdensome five-day salary withholding program and lag payroll for state employees.

We passed groundbreaking legislation to regulate the use of artificial intelligence in the public sector, ensuring that technological advancements don't come at the cost of workers' rights. We also achieved significant changes to improve the civil service system, making it more accessible and efficient for current and prospective public employees.

These accomplishments demonstrate the power of our union when we stand together. Your activism and support have been instrumental in these successes. While challenges will always arise, I'm confident that together, we will continue to push forward.

In solidarity,


MARY E. SULLIVAN
PRESIDENT



2025 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET SETTING THE STAGE

2024 is an election year, with all seats of the State Senate and Assembly up for re-election in November. This political context created a sense of urgency among legislators to deliver concrete results for their constituents.

However, these pursuits were initially hampered by a projected \$4.3 billion budget deficit that would require budget cuts to close the gap. This changed dramatically, with the state experiencing higher-than-expected tax revenues, which not only closed the budget gap, but created a \$2.2 billion budget surplus.

This surplus comes with its own problems, as the legislature and governor must decide how this money should be spent. CSEA and other public sector unions saw this influx as an opportunity to achieve much needed Tier 6 reform and other changes to bolster recruitment and retention of the public sector workforce.



2025 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

Tier 6 Reform

We were successful in achieving significant reforms to Tier 6 in this year's budget! The enacted budget changes the way that pensions are calculated upon retirement.

Under the previous law, a person's final average salary, which is the basis for determining your annual pension, is based on their highest five consecutive years of earnings. The new law will calculate it based on a person's highest three consecutive years.



This change puts Tier 6 in line with Tiers 4 and 5 and will result in higher pension payments for nearly all Tier 6 employees when they retire. The average CSEA member could see tens of thousands of dollars in additional benefits in retirement because of this change!

In addition, we were successful in extending a law that excludes overtime earnings when calculating a Tier 6 employee's contribution rate. This means that a person's contribution rate is based on base salary only.

CSEA remains committed to advancing Tier 5 & 6 reforms in the future to achieve tier equity.

State Agencies

State Payroll

The budget makes two changes related to payroll for new state employees:

- It eliminates the five-day salary withholding program beginning on July 1, 2024. Upon hire, state employees have one day of pay withheld in each of their first five pay periods, meaning an employee does not receive a full paycheck for nearly three months. Employees hired before July 1, 2024 will not receive any days already withheld back until they leave state service.
- It stops the lag payroll for newly hired state employees beginning on July 1, 2025. Under the current lag payroll, newly hired state employees do not receive a paycheck for at least a month. This will ensure that new employees are paid much sooner.

Civil Service Reforms

The enacted budget:

- Expands the NY HELP Program to all open-competitive titles, streamlining the hiring process while we are in a staffing emergency.
- Requires the Department of Civil Service to review all jobs with college degree requirements to see if education requirements can be substituted for work experience.



Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS)

The enacted budget authorizes closure of up to five DOCCS facilities, provided the governor gives 90 days' notice prior to the closure. Current law requires a one-year notice prior to closing a DOCCS facility. CSEA strongly opposed this proposal. Governor Hochul announced that Great Meadows Correctional Facility in Washington County and Sullivan Correctional Facility in Sullivan County will be closing in November 2024.

Office of Mental Health (OMH).

The enacted budget:

- Creates 200 new state-operated inpatient beds.
- Creates 75 “Transition to Home” beds, 25 of which will be state operated.
- Provides funding for an additional 273 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), including 264 new FTEs at OMH facilities across the state.



State University of New York (SUNY).

The enacted budget:

- Provides \$66 million in new operating funding for SUNY, including \$36 million for fringe benefits.
- Raises income eligibility for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) up to \$125,000 and increases the minimum TAP award from \$500 to \$1,000.



Local Governments

Funding

The enacted budget:

- Increases funding for local governments by \$50 million. This is the first increase in several years.
- Provides \$135 million in new County Partnership Grants, including \$85 million for the development and operation of public safety communications systems, like 9-1-1 call centers.

Roads and Bridges

The enacted budget:

- Funds local roads and bridges at last year's level. This funding helps pay for repairs and maintenance of local government roads and highways.
- Provides \$333 million for upstate transit programs. This is an increase of 8.7% over last year's levels.



Community Colleges

The enacted budget:

- Maintains the community college funding floor, which requires that SUNY's community colleges receive at least 100% of prior year funding.
- Provides \$447 million in operating funding for SUNY's Community Colleges, an increase of \$7 million over last year.
- Provides a \$32 million increase in capital funding for SUNY's Community Colleges.

Healthcare

Hospitals

The enacted budget:

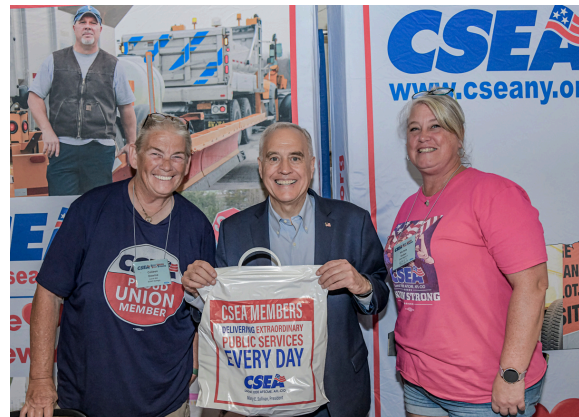
- Includes \$825 million in Medicaid reimbursement rate increases.
- Includes \$500 million in additional support for financially distressed and safety net hospitals.

SUNY Downstate Medical Center

The enacted budget creates a community advisory board for the modernization and revitalization of SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University.

This board will review options to strengthen SUNY Downstate and promote longer term viability for its healthcare and education mission.

This board must take input from workers, community members, and health care experts and deliver a report to the governor and legislature by April 1, 2025. During this time, the state cannot authorize any reduction in inpatient services at SUNY Downstate.



The budget also provides \$100 million in operating funds and \$300 million in capital funding for the hospital.



Education

K-12

The enacted budget:

- Provides \$35.9 billion in total school aid, including \$24.9 billion in Foundation Aid.
- Rejects the governor’s proposal to remove the state’s “hold harmless” provision.
- Allows public sector retirees to continue working in schools and BOCES programs without having their pension diminished through the end of the 2024-25 school year.



Libraries

The enacted budget:

- Provides \$104 million in library aid, an increase of \$4 million.
- Provides \$44 million in funding for the Library Construction Fund, which supports capital projects at libraries across the state.

Childcare

The enacted budget requires all counties to pay childcare providers a minimum of 10% more for providing care to a child whose family is experiencing homelessness or a child that requires nontraditional hours of care, such as overnight and weekend care. This goes into effect on April 1, 2025.



Retirees

The enacted budget rejects the governor's proposal to eliminate the Income Related Medicare Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) reimbursement currently provided by NYSHIP-participating employers. IRMAA is imposed on retirees with an annual income of \$103,000 or higher (\$206,000 or higher for joint filers) and the costs range from \$70 to \$419 per month.



Other Proposals of Note

The enacted budget:

- Includes a 2.87% cost-of-living-adjustment for human services providers. At least 1.7% of this amount must be given in the form of increased wages to employees.
- Extends the ability of employees to utilize Covid-19 sick leave through July 2025.



2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION YEAR AT A GLANCE

In the 2023-2024 session, the State Senate and Assembly introduced more than 20,000 bills. In total, 3,327 bills made it through the senate, while the assembly saw 1,986 pass. Ultimately, 1,701 bills were approved by both chambers.

CSEA proudly supported 210 bills that passed both houses of the legislature. These bills aim to make a real difference. Highlights include measures to regulate artificial intelligence in public sector roles, recognize provisional time for promotional exams, and ensure that civil service exams are updated every five years.

At the same time, we successfully opposed more than 500 bills that threatened members' jobs and working conditions, including attempts to outsource essential services and reduce staffing in local correctional facilities.

These accomplishments are a testament to the dedication of members who engaged with their legislators through calls, emails, and in-person discussions to advocate for our shared goals. As we close the chapter on the 2024 legislative session, CSEA is committed to ensuring our passed bills become law and is already gearing up for another productive session in 2025.

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PRIORITY BILLS

The Legislative Oversight of Automated Decision-making in Government (LOADing) Act

S.7543 (Gonzalez) / **A.9430** (Otis)

CSEA Position: Support

Status: Passed both houses, awaiting delivery to governor

This first of its kind legislation aims to regulate the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within the public sector. Specifically, this bill includes groundbreaking employee protection language that will prohibit the displacement of state employees when a state agency uses an AI program or system. No other state has similar protections.

Crediting Provisional Time for Promotional Exams

S.8557 (Jackson) / **A.9386** (Pheffer Amato)

CSEA Position: Support

Status: Signed, Chapter 307 of the Laws of 2024

This legislation allows time spent by an employee in provisional status to count towards time required for a promotional exam if the employee becomes competitive in the same title without a break. This legislation will give CSEA members who were provisional the ability to take promotional examinations faster than they currently are able and grow their career in the public sector.



Updating Civil Service Exams

S.8551 (Jackson) / **A.9349** (Pheffer Amato)

CSEA Position: Support

Status: Signed, Chapter 305 of the Laws of 2024

This legislation requires the New York State Department of Civil Service to review and update civil service exams every five years. This will help ensure that exams remain relevant to the jobs for which they are seeking candidates.



Age & Education Requirements for Civil Service Exams

S.8216 (Jackson) / **A.8876** (Pheffer Amato)

CSEA Position: Support

Status: Signed, Chapter 303 of the Laws of 2024

This legislation allows individuals who are within 12 months of meeting the age or education requirements of a given civil service job to take an exam for that position. Current law requires a person to be within 6 months of meeting the age requirement. This legislation will allow prospective employees to get their foot in the door early, reducing the time they need to wait between meeting the job requirements and beginning a career in the public sector.

Virtual Training for CPS Workers

S.6357B (Mannion) / **A.7341B** (Hevesi)

CSEA Position: Support

Status: Passed both houses, awaiting delivery to governor

This legislation allows Child Protective Services caseworkers to complete certain training requirements, excluding the annual in-service training requirement, virtually, rather than in-person. This removes a costly and time-consuming burden on both case workers and their employers. In addition, permitting virtual trainings increases flexibility for caseworkers, allowing them to complete training at a time and pace that fits their demanding schedules.

Expanded Workers' Compensation Coverage for Mental Injury

S.6635 (Ramos) / A.5745 (Ramos)

CSEA Position: Support

Status: Passed both houses, awaiting delivery to governor

This legislation prohibits the Workers' Compensation Board from dismissing an employees' claim of mental health injury caused by work-related stress solely because the injuries arose from "normal work" conditions. Under current practice, the Workers' Compensation Board can dismiss an employee's claim if it determines that the mental health injury was the result of normal work-related stress. This means that an employee may only access benefits if their otherwise legitimate mental health injuries are related to extraordinary conditions and stressors. However, for many CSEA-represented jobs, including emergency dispatchers, first responders, and others, "normal work" conditions are extraordinarily stressful. This bill will ensure that all employees can access workers' compensation for legitimate work-related mental health claims and receive the treatment and care that they require.

The Empire Act

S.541B (Hoylman-Sigal) / A.9012 (Simon)

CSEA Position: Oppose

Status: Died in Senate Labor Committee, Assembly Labor Committee

This legislation outsources wage theft enforcement actions to private organizations. This work is performed by staff at the Department of Labor (DOL). Advocates of this legislation claim that it is necessary because the DOL does not have sufficient staff. We agree that the staffing levels must increase. However, the solution is not the privatization of this function, rather, it is for the state to hire additional staff to enforce these laws.



PEOPLE PROGRAM

The PEOPLE Program is a voluntary contribution fund for CSEA's Legislative and Political Action Department. In order to remain influential in the legislative and political realm, CSEA needs resources. However, federal elections law prohibits using your union dues for federal campaigns and lobbying. The PEOPLE Program provides the funds that bring us political clout and give us the ability to influence legislation and political leaders at the federal, state, and local levels.

For as little as 27 cents a day, you can help to protect and strengthen collective bargaining rights, health care and retirement benefits, safety in the workplace, and much more. Whether you are public or private sector, a active member or a retiree, a strong political presence is vital to our existence as a union.

Visit our website at cseany.org/people for more information on the PEOPLE Program and to learn how you can sign up!



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